

Vallejo sorority assists with MLK Day volunteer event at Food Bank



Volunteers (from left) Shannon Seay, of American Canyon, Bree Graham of Bay Point and Morgan Jefferson of Vallejo package up carrots into three pound bundles as they give of their time during a food sorting event at the Fairfield branch of the Food Bank of Solano and Contra Costa. Members Kappa Beta Omega Chapter of the international Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority of Vallejo, spent their Martin Luther King day by sorting fresh produce that will be distributed local income areas as way to honor Dr. King's legacy. (Joel Rosenbaum — The Reporter)

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Vallejo's Kappa Beta Omega Chapter of the international Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority was well-represented at a Martin Luther King Jr. Day food sorting event at the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano in Fairfield. After all, community service is what both food organizations are all about.

"This is a way of life for us," Sandra Stowes, Kappa Beta Omega president, said. "We volunteer all the time in the community of Vallejo and Solano County."

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (AKA) was founded in 1908 by 16 students at Howard University in Washington, D.C. It was the first African-American sorority and today boasts

a membership of more than 30,000 at more than 1,000 chapters throughout the United States and beyond. The Vallejo chapter was established in 1974, and it carries on the international group's message of partnering with communities to provide sustainable service. The local chapter volunteers for the annual Relay for Life, provides assistance to the homeless, holds an annual turkey donation drive and distributes blankets to Christian Health Center in Vallejo, among many other activities.

As with the many other AKA chapters worldwide, Kappa Beta Omega took part in a Martin Luther King Day of Service to honor the civil rights icon and civic leader. The chapter took part in a march and parade hosted by the Vallejo chapter of the NAACP, attended a program at Hogan Middle School and then went out to Fairfield to help sort items at the Food Bank.

The Fairfield branch of the Food Bank of Solano and Contra Costa, which hosts volunteers for food sorting six days a week, held its first MLK Day-centered food sorting event last year, one year after the Concord branch began doing so. The idea is to honor King's legacy by providing opportunities for community service, one of his biggest values in life.

"The holiday is about being of service, kindness and doing good deeds," Geary Baria, the volunteer coordinator at the Solano Food Bank, said.

More than 20 people were present Monday afternoon to help sort through deliveries of carrots, potatoes, apples and onions, tossing out the produce that was too soft or squishy. Most of the volunteers were members of AKA.

For Kappa Beta Omega member Keylai Boughton, the day was all about "helping people and making sure people actually have food."

"It's definitely exciting to help those in need because not everyone's blessed to have everything," Ashley Caldwell, another Kappa Beta Omega member, said.

Baria was pleased with the turnout.

"It's a good turnout," he said. "It's more than my schedule, which is fine. We have a limit on volunteers, but if extras come in, I don't send them away."

Baria hopes volunteers got a good experience out of the sorting and hopes participants will encourage others to sign up.

Stowes said Kappa Beta Omega will continue to take part in such events in the future.

"This is what our organization is all about," she said.

For more information on Kappa Beta Omega, visit kappabetaomegaaka1974.com/home.html.

For more information on the Food Bank, including volunteer opportunities, visit volunteer.foodbankccs.org/.